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STRATEGIC VISION: A LEADER AND A PROCESS

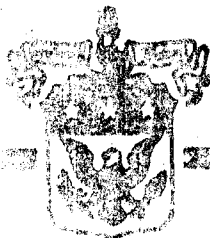
BY

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Chapter Two defines vision and strategic vision, describes the purpose and dimensions of vision. Vision is distinguished from planning and forecasting. Visionaries are distinguished from planners and futurists.

Chapter Three is about the leader. Although there is no "recipe" for developing a visionary leader, there are attributes of a leader and activities which identify a leader as visionary, which support vision formulation and which provide some insight into the question of how to create a vision.

Chapter Four concerns the importance of position to a leader who exercises strategic vision. It argues that a leader who is not in a position of "decisive authority" as a strategic leader cannot create strategic vision, whatever his personal attributes.

Chapter Five is about the vision creation process. While the chapters on vision and the leader may be somewhat generic and Army-independent, the chapter on the process is very Army-centered. It summarizes the process in the Army which provide Army force structure and doctrine and thereby shape the Army.

Chapter Six examines vision from the perspective of what happens when vision is not created, why the leader may fail to create vision and the institutional barriers to vision creation.

Chapter Seven enumerates conclusions and recommendations to develop a capacity for vision in senior leaders and to improve the vision-supporting process of the Army.

Chapter Eight summarizes the paper.

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STRATEGIC VISION: A LEADER AND A PROCESS

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

BY

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of strategic vision formulation in general and in the U.S. Army, to suggest some areas in which the Army excels, and to recommend improvements in the Army processes which contribute to vision creation. In order to examine the process of formulating strategic vision, there is discussion of vision and of the visionary leader. This is because there are conflicting views about what vision is and is not and there is no established description of either the attributes of the visionary leader or the degree to which a leader personally must be visionary in order to create a strategic vision for an institution. The U.S. Army is one of those optimistic institutions in which it is widely believed that processes can be implaced to compensate for variations in the personal capacities of its leaders. This works well in many areas of leaders' responsibilities. It is needed also in vision creation.

Chapter One introduces the thesis that vision creation does not reside only in a leader but also in the processes of an institution.

Chapter Two defines vision and strategic vision, describes the purpose and dimensions of vision. Vision is distinguished from planning and forecasting. Visionaries are distinguished from planners and futurists.

Chapter Three is about the leader. Although there is no "recipe" for developing a visionary leader, there are attributes of a leader and activities which identify a leader as visionary, which support vision formulation and which provide some insight into the question of how to create a vision.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

If there is a spark of genius in the leadership function at all, it must lie in this transcending ability, a kind of magic, to assemble--out of all the variety of images, signals, forecasts and alternatives--a clearly articulated vision of the future that is at once simple, easily understood, clearly desirable, and energizing.¹

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to determine what the strategic vision process in the U.S. Army is and to identify possible improvements. This includes defining strategic vision, describing a visionary leader and discussing the process of creating a strategic vision.

The process of vision creation refers to the strategic leader among people who believe that vision derives entirely from a visionary; in this case, the discussion of process would center on the leader's attributes and activities and would extend to questions about how to develop a visionary leader.

Among those who believe that vision is derivative of an organizational culture or of mechanisms in an institution which support vision creation, the discussion of the process of vision creation would center on systems an institution could establish to facilitate vision creation. It is not possible to limit the explanation of how strategic vision is

¹Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985), 103.

created to either the leader or to the institution. The process of vision creation is a function of both the leader and the institution.

Thesis of this Paper

The thesis of the paper is that vision is created by leaders and the process is not entirely internal to the leader but is one which can be supported by institutional processes. The word vision will be used to refer to the content, not the process.

Topics to be Examined

The questions raised by this paper are: Is vision creation an intuitive activity of a leader, or is it the result of logical analysis which can be institutionalized? (Chapter 3) Is vision an extension of long range planning, or does planning derive from vision? How are we to judge vision? (Chapter 5) Is it still vision if it turns out not to lead an institution to success? (Chapter 2) What stimulates the creation of vision--a change in the environment, a change in leaders, a change in perceptions of the people in and surrounding the Army? (Chapter 5) If strategic vision is so important, why does the U.S. Army not embrace either the task of developing visionary leaders or the task of establishing institutional processes for vision creation? (Chapter 7)

As these questions are resolved, a number of conclusions emerge about how the Army develops strategic leaders

and about how the Army as an institution could better support vision creation. The conclusions about leader development include how officers handle uncertainty, how the work of senior leaders is structured with respect to vision creation, and the leader selection process which favors certain attributes. The conclusions about the Army's institutional processes include the need for systematic forecasting to serve as a basis for vision creation, the critical influence of the value the institution places on vision creation, the institutional need for both continuity of vision and measures of effectiveness for vision. The final two conclusions, while dependent upon an institutional change, are very tied to the personal styles of the strategic leaders of the Army of today and tomorrow.

Vision in the Army

The Army has portions of the necessary leader development and institutional processes in place to create vision. There are gaps; these are identified in Chapter Seven of the paper with recommendations for some small changes which will result in significant improvement in the capacity of the U.S. Army for creating strategic vision.

Test of Thesis

The test of the thesis that vision creation in the Army will be improved by changes in the approach to leader development and changes in the institutional processes is simple. Try it. Changes suggested in this paper are at worst

harmless and at best productive. It is a low-risk proposal with potential for high payoff.

CHAPTER 2

DEFINITIONS

Vision

One definition of vision is that it "is the ability to create a mental image of the possible and to identify a desirable future state of affairs."² Another is that vision is a "coherent description of the purpose and desired state of the organization."³

These definitions are useful illustrations of the confusion about vision which begins as soon as the discussion begins. Does "vision" refer to the capacity for vision or to the content of vision? It is used both ways and in this paper will refer to the content of the vision, rather than to the ability of the leader to create vision.

Vision and the Leader

When vision is used to refer to the ability or capacity of the leader without distinguishing between the vision created and the process of creating the vision, this implies that the entire process resides in the leader. This paper will show that it does not.

²William E. Rosenbach and Robert L. Taylor, Contemporary Issues in Leadership (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1989), 207.

³Conversation with COL Mock, Faculty, Army War College.

Creation of Vision

Vision is created by a leader to give meaning and significance to an institution's efforts. This is necessary because:

All organizations depend on the existence of shared meanings and interpretations of reality, which facilitate coordinated action. The actions and symbols of leadership frame and mobilize meaning. Leaders articulate and define what has previously remained implicit and unsaid; then they invent images, metaphors, and models that provide a focus for new attention . . . they consolidate or challenge prevailing wisdom . . . an essential factor in leadership is the capacity to influence and organize meaning for the members of the organization.⁴

In this way, vision serves the institution and its constituents.

Strategic Vision

Strategic vision refers to the echelon in the national security structure of the leader who creates the vision. The concerns of strategic vision are directed outward to national security issues, to other services, to the issues linking the U.S. Army to other countries.

Strategic vision could be formulated by the Secretary or the Chief of Staff of the Army, the Commanders in Chief of Unified Commands, the Commander of Training and Doctrine Command. That these leaders might have a vision does not necessarily define that as strategic vision. The scope of their vision, its impact on the national security system,

⁴Bennis and Nanus, Leaders, 39.

the level of significance of the vision must all be considered when deciding whether to label a vision strategic or not.

Dimensions of Strategic Vision

Strategic vision refers to either of two dimensions: time or abstraction. With respect to time, it is the most long-range perspective created to define the desired future state of the institution (the U.S. Army). This is what is most commonly meant by strategic vision.

On the other hand, a leader could create a strategic vision of some aspect of the Army that is not projected into the distant future. It could be a strategic vision which concerns the near time but is visionary because it is unformed in any other way. This vision is an abstract conception of something. It is the basis for concepts, then plans, then programs, and, finally, the actual event or state. For example, the Army Chief of Staff would articulate a strategic vision for the Army as being the military element in contributing to a United States strategy of global prosperity led by the United States in partnership with her allies. From the vision, objectives would be developed to link the vision to concepts, leading to plans, programs and actions.

It is not usual for strategic visions to be of near term matters since, with the shortened time line, it is less likely that a matter of strategic significance would emerge.

However, an example of when such an occasion might present itself is during a time of political upheaval in the world and the need for a new vision occurs. With the collapse of the economic and political strength of the Soviet Union in recent years, just such an opportunity for creating vision in the short term has occurred.

Evaluating Vision

One more note on the definition of strategic vision: There is a tendency to want to judge a vision in the same way we might judge plans. First, what did the plan set out to do? In planning, we ask: Did the plan come to fruition? Were there aspects of the future not foreseen by the plan? How effectively did the plan reduce confusion and uncertainty? In appraising a vision, we ask: Does the vision have sufficient scope to facilitate accomplishing a wide range of goals for the institution? Does the vision provide meaning and significance to today's work? Is the vision believed and "owned" by the members of the institution? Is the vision sufficiently broad to be useful beyond the tenure of today's leaders? Is the vision specific enough to give direction and to be accessible for periodic updates? These are very different questions. Note that it is not appropriate to ask whether a vision "came true." It is not the function of vision to make predictions. While plans are evaluated retrospectively (if at all), visions are evaluated upon creation.

When the time being envisioned is reached, the vision will have changed along the way, and it is irrelevant whether the original vision of 1991 created in 1951 matches today's experience of 1991. One reason vision is not judged retrospectively is that a large part of its purpose is served not so much in its explicit focus (as in "we can put a man on the moon within ten years") but in the secondary benefits derived from the attempt to fulfill the vision (increased emphasis on science and math in schools, spin-off technologies of the space program, renewed national vigor, enthusiasm and hope).

For the purpose of this paper, the terms vision and strategic vision will be used interchangeably.

Planning and Creating Vision Are Different Functions

It is important to distinguish between planning and creating vision. Although the visionary makes use of planning, the planning function is not like the vision creation function.

Planning is based on what is known or projected about the future, and it deals in the arena of certainty. Creating vision is founded on knowledge of the current environment and on an intuitive, innovative leap from what is conceivable and projected to what is the desirable state at some future time. Planning carries an audit trail of logic; vision may be logical retrospectively, but it is originally conceived in an inspired and informed moment.

One additional distinction between planning and vision creation is that the skills associated with planning do not simply transfer to vision creation. Although vision creation takes place generally in the timeframe beyond that of planning, this is a coincidental convergence on a timeline.

Vision is not simply "planning but farther out." Colonel Bruce Clarke makes a strong case that planning occurs once vision is created. In fact, this helps define vision. One way to discover the leader's vision is to explore the concepts from which planning derives. The vision may be implicit. Whether vision is publicly known or not, it serves as the basis for planning.

In the description of Army processes for managing the Army (formulating the National Military Strategy, the Defense Planning Guidance, the Army Long Range Planning Guidance, the Concept Based Requirements System, the Planning, Programming, Budget and Execution System and the Structure and Composition System), there is reference to vision as it is articulated by the Army's senior leaders using, primarily, trend projection as a method.⁵ There is a difference between a forecast arrived at by any method (trend projection is one possible technique) and a vision.

Colonel Bruce Clarke has produced a chart which supports the definition of a vision as being different from

⁵U. S. Army War College, Army Command and Management Text, 1990-91 (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1990), 11-3.

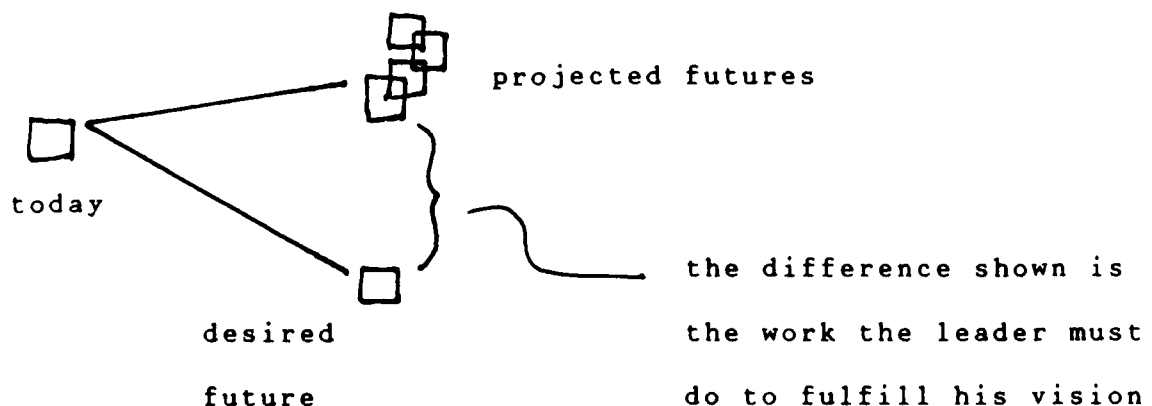
the results of trend projection into the long-range future. Colonel Clarke believes that vision is a leader's description of his concept of the desired end state, that this is a preferred end state, and that the leader starts with that desired end state, plans backward from it to the present and works to create conditions that will support the creation of the desired end state. This, Colonel Clarke says, is different from the work of a futurist.

Futurists

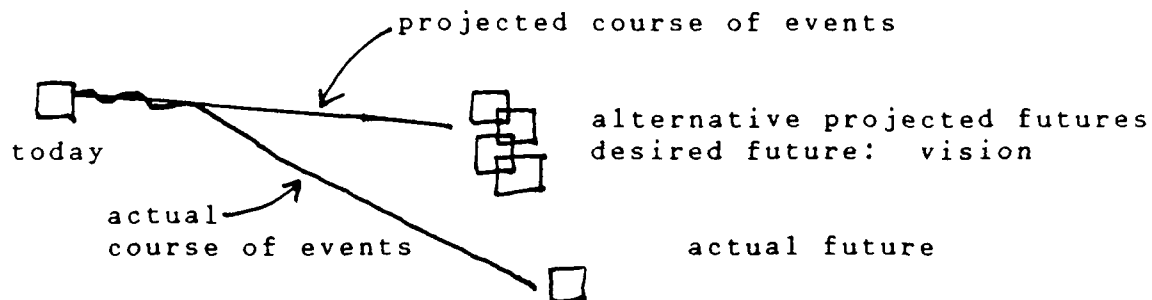
The futurist makes no value judgment about the projected future; he projects that future using any of a number of processes (trend projection, Delphi, etc.). The projected future and the desired future (vision) are different. It is the leader's task to envision the desired future and to set the institution in motion to attain it.

Desired and Projected Futures

The chart Colonel Clarke has used to show this is:



A similar graphic by Colonel Richard Yarger accounts for several possible futures (alternative scenarios) and is interesting for its display of the difference between the course of events projected today and the future and the actual course of events:



Both of these graphics show that the projected future is not synonymous with the desired future, the vision of the future Army.

In the description of the theory and the practice of command, leadership and management of the Army, the Army Command and Management Text, 1990-91, the term vision means two different things. On the one hand, it refers to assessing the Army's future situation and means the result of trend projection.⁶ On the other hand, it is used also to refer to visions "derived from the National Military Strategy, the Defense Planning Guidance" to refer to vision as a desired end state for the Army.⁷ Unfortunately, in this second example, which is the correct use of the word

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., 11-2.

"vision," no process is described for achieving the vision. It has been easier to describe vision and the visionary than it has been to describe the process of creating a vision for the Army.

CHAPTER 3

THE VISIONARY LEADER: ATTRIBUTES AND ACTIVITIES

In the study of strategic vision, there are four factors: a leader with the capacity to create a strategic vision, a position in the institution from which a vision's formulation is appropriate and necessary, a process which supports the formulation and institutionalization of a strategic vision, and the vision itself.

Section I: Attributes

Of the four factors, the attributes of the strategic leader is a subject that is widely written about and on which there seems to be the greatest unanimity. And, of all four factors, the strategic leader's attributes seem to be the most significant variable. The following are some attributes of the strategic leader who has the capacity to create a strategic vision.

Self Confidence

A visionary must have a deep personal well of self-confidence.⁸ This is important because the articulation of a vision will almost always contain controversial points or make people angry. This is a common reaction when resisting change, being threatened by challenge or being shaken by the urging to stretch beyond mediocrity to excellence.

⁸Perry M. Smith, "Long-Range Planning: A National Necessity," in Creating Strategic Vision, ed. P. M. Smith, J. P. Allen, J. H. Stewart II, P. D. Whitehouse (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1987), 22.

Additionally, the visionary's self-confidence is reflected in his attitude that something he could do would make a difference in the world and in his confidence in his judgment that something is important.⁹

Risk-Taking

The visionary is a risk-taker. If he makes a career of avoiding risk and still somehow reaches a position requiring strategic vision, he will not demonstrate a capacity for it.¹⁰ He must be willing to reach beyond the certainty of the present and beyond the near certainty of the mid-term and into the uncertain future with its many possible outcomes. This requires the visionary to think in the long-term, to think conceptually, to see the possibilities, to be widely read, to have a deep understanding of history and to formulate new insights based on the multiple factors affecting the future.¹¹

Perceiving

General Perry Smith¹² characterizes good planners in terms of two personality-type tests. One is the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator; the other is the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI). General Smith believes

⁹Gerald M. Weinberg, Becoming a Technical Leader: An Organic Problem-Solving Approach (New York: Dorset House Publishing, 1986), 100.

¹⁰Smith, Creating Strategic Vision, 5 and 22.

¹¹Ibid. 5, 21-22.

¹²Ibid.

good planners are "J"s, that is, judging function, giving form, structure, bringing closure. This is useful in that it points to visionaries being "P"s,¹³ that is, perceiving function, being open, absorbing data, delaying structure, exploring possibilities. The matter of visionaries being overrepresented in Ps is not documented. However, when we consider the description of NTs (intuitive, thinking) and SJs (sensing, judging), there is some coincidence of what would seem to be the characteristics of visionaries with NTs and planners with SJs. According to Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thuesen,¹⁴ intuitive thinkers (NTs) have

an ability to readily see the big picture; a talent for conceptualization and systems planning; insight into the internal logic and underlying principles of systems and organizations; the ability to speak and write clearly and precisely.

The sensing, judging persons (SJs) strengths are "administration, dependability, the ability to take charge, always know who's in charge." SJs "have a tendency to do what needs to be done today, often to the neglect of what must be done tomorrow."

¹³Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thuesen, The Typewatching Profiles, excerpted from Typetalk (Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1988), 214-290.

¹⁴Ibid.

Innovating

The Kirton Adaptation-Innovation Inventory¹⁵ was also used by General Smith to describe good planners as being "more than one standard deviation from the norm as innovators."¹⁶ This is a characteristic of planners that probably does apply to visionaries. A visionary would need to be most comfortable in the innovation mode rather than adaptation.

¹⁵ According to Dr. Herbert F. Barber, Professor, USAWC, there are characteristics of adaptors and innovators (as measured by KAI) which are as follows:

<u>Potential Advantages</u>	<u>Potential Disadvantages</u>
ADAPTORS ARE:	HOWEVER, ADAPTORS CAN ALSO BE:
Precise	Vulnerable to social pressure
Reliable	Slow to see need for change
Efficient	Too comfortable with existing
Methodical	method of doing things
Disciplined	(i.e., paradigm)
Good problem solvers	
Focused on doing things better	
INNOVATORS:	INNOVATORS CAN ALSO BE:
Think tangentially	Undisciplined
Question assumptions	Irreverent
Manipulate problems	Creators of group dissonance
Are catalysts for change	Hard to control
Thrive or unstructured	Insensitive
situations	Abrasive
Have high self-confidence	
Focus on doing things	
differently	

¹⁶ Smith, Creating Strategic Vision, 5.

Intelligence

Students of futurism, long-range planning and vision typically cite 10-25 years in the future as the period of the long term. Planning is thought to occur in three periods, near term (0-5 years), mid term (6-10 years) and long term (11-25 years). Beyond 25 years, planning does not occur. This is because planning deals with certainty, provides continuity between present and future, and concerns what is predicted. The future beyond 25 years generally is not accessible in these three respects. At that point the mode is visioning. Perry Smith characterized a view of the period beyond 25 years as "intellectually difficult except in certain technical and R & D areas," for example, space, medicine.¹⁷

General Smith is right. There is great intellectual difficulty in creating vision. That difficulty demands the attribute of above-average intelligence. An extremely high level of intelligence may be of diminishing help to the vision creation capacity since there are other requirements of a strategic visionary (pragmatism, leadership ability and competitiveness) which probably eliminate people of very high intelligence. Dr. David Campbell, in a talk to the Army War College on 12 February 1991, provided a list of attributes of the leader which included the attribute of

¹⁷Ibid., 3.

"just above average intelligence" but not extremely high intelligence."

Power

Among the attributes of a strategic leader with vision is that of power. This attribute is related to the ability of the person to rise to the position of leadership. Power is vital to the effectiveness of the leader in articulating vision. So, in this context, it is more an attribute of the visionary than it is a description of the position he holds.

Power is described by Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus as "the basic energy to initiate and sustain action translating intention into reality."¹⁸ Its function is to enable the leader to create vision and to find ways to institutionalize that vision. The exercise of power, "translating intention into reality," and the use of vision require confidence in intention and vision, the will to bring visions to life and the belief in the value of undertaking what is the most arduous, most significant and most risky part of a strategic leader's job. Without power, a leader's capacity for vision is moot.

Focus

Focus enables a leader to create vision. Focus is also a byproduct of vision. The leader's knowledge of the environment of the Army is critical to establishing focus. He must understand the role of the institution in the future

¹⁸Bennis and Nanus, Leaders, 15.

and the relationship with the rest of society.¹⁹ It is his ability to describe that future role and to articulate its significance to society that establishes focus.

Vision is possible because of the leader's ability to focus on results and outcomes. And, vision creates focus. He must know the elements of power (military, economic, political) of the United States, of the friendly, neutral and adversarial nations. The assessment must be of the absolute power of each of these elements and of the relative strengths not only of each nation's power but of the matrix created when regional partnerships are considered or when multiple elements of power are considered. An example of this is found in an article by Joseph S. Nye, Jr.²⁰ In this article, Mr. Nye considers the sources of power (resources, military, economies, science/technology, national cohesion, universal culture, and international institutions) by country (USA, USSR, Europe, Japan, China). The array presents the details and the foundation for an integrated view of world power. To reach conclusions which characterize the elements of power (military, political, social-psychological, economic) and which place these in a construct of meaning is the fundamental exercise of strategic visioning. The ability to focus empowers the

¹⁹Conversation with Colonel Yarger, April 1991.

²⁰Joseph S. Nye, "Still in the Game," World Monitor, March 1990, 43.

visionary leader to sort what is important from what is not important, not only in the elements which make up a vision but in the more mature part of the process in developing an expression of the vision.

Balance

With the masses of information available to the strategic leader, even with a focus to single out which trends and events are important to watch, balance is critical. Balance is a way of sorting information. It brings perspective to the analysis and makes all the difference between a leader whose focus may be correct but who lacks an appreciation for the views of other significant strategic players.

Balance recognizes the importance of others' centers of gravity, and it permits the leader to establish a flexible vision that will survive the changes in a current operations environment without damage to the long-term view.

Balance is the exercise of some degree of empathy for the opposing viewpoint, the ability to see arguments which do not support a cherished position. Balance gives the leader's vision credibility because it accommodates other competing views, thereby enlarging the constituency for the leader's vision. In creating strategic vision, the challenge for most leaders is to keep the vision sufficiently broad so that advocates of numerous narrower views may all continue to operate within the context of

the vision until natural selection eliminates the less worthy courses.

Timing

A strategic leader's timing is the result of his understanding his environment and how it operates. Timing is knowing when to act and when not to act for greatest effect. The elements of a vision may have been well chosen, and there may be a healthy balance established among those threads; but timing is critical to the survival of the vision. Timing contributes efficiency to the strategic visionary.

For the strategic leader to have comprehensive influence, timing provides the mechanism for exercising it. That sense of timing is a personal attribute of the strategic visionary that is important to compensate for the inevitable deficiencies in the process. Finally, good timing brings other attributes into play and facilitates the creation of strategic vision in a way that is as integral to the process as is the attribute of power.

Reframing a Problem

In the vision creation process, the strategic leader may not always accept the way decisions or concepts are framed for him. Sometimes, he adjusts a question by rejecting absolute bipolarity or by interpreting events as sequential without being consequential. This capacity for seeing the problem in a different light gives the strategic

leader great flexibility. It is the result of the leader having a broader perspective on his institution and its relation to the world than the more limited perspective of people in lower positions in the institution.

Section II: Activities

In creating strategic vision, a leader has specific activities. There are certain activities which are the task of the leader and which cannot be done by others in the institution due to lack of power or perspective.

One Army leader, General Thurman, has talked about the work a general does. That is, the position of leadership at the highest level is associated with specific functions and activities and is not limited to an executive role.

The activities of the leader who must create a strategic vision for his organization have been catalogued by Bennis and Warren in some detail.²¹ These activities include reducing uncertainty for junior leaders which sets up positive secondary effects, analyzing past performance of the organization, synthesizing the analysis, creating a vision, communicating the vision, generating enthusiasm and action from the vision, building access to those outside the organization as a part of the continuous activity of vision formulation.

²¹Bennis and Nanus, Leaders.

Handling Uncertainty

While the visionary leader operates in a highly uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment, it is his role to reduce as much of that uncertainty as possible for the leaders and managers who work for him. The leader may do this with formal planning processes. According to Bennis and Nanus, these:

1. Create networks of information not otherwise available to the junior leaders.
2. Force operating managers to extend their time horizons and see their work in a larger framework.
3. Require rigorous communications about goals, strategic issues and resource allocations.
4. Systematically teach managers about the future to better intuitively calibrate their short term and interim decisions.
5. Create an attitude about the future that makes them less uncertain about the future and consequently more willing to make commitments that extend beyond short time horizons.
6. Stimulate longer term studies that could have high impact at key junctures for specific strategic decisions.²²

As the visionary uses planning processes to extend the boundaries of what is known about the future, he creates a broader base of understanding for his organization about the areas needing attention and about how the organization got where it is today.

²²Ibid., 212.

Analysis of the Past

Analysis of the past is critical to understand what contributed to past successes and failures, to identify long-term trends and to link the organization's performance to outside indicators.²³ When the analysis includes what would "happen if the organization continues its present path without a major change" and what can be done to "alter the course of events" and "what consequences will occur,"²⁴ the leader is also building the rationale and support for his vision once it is synthesized.

Synthesizing the Vision

Synthesizing all the elements of information available to the leader is an activity only the leader can perform. The comment made of Frances Hasselbein's highly touted revival of the Girl Scouts of America organization (1976-89) was that she was faithful to the essence of the organizational mission.²⁵ In her synthesis, she never lost sight of the essence of the mission and created an organization each disparate part of which contributed to mission success or was discarded. Judgment, intuition, and creativity are

²³Ibid., 97.

²⁴Ibid., 105.

²⁵Patricia O'Toole, "Thrifty, Kind--and Smart as Hell," Lear's Magazine, October 1990, 30.

the skills brought to bear by the leader in synthesizing the vision.²⁶

Judgment

To choose which elements of the planning processes' outputs to respond to and which to reject, to choose which course of action to promote and which to preserve as a potential alternative in the future--these choices demand the leader's best judgment.

Most who write about vision creation emphasize the contribution of intuition over judgment. Colonel Barney Forsythe²⁷ believes this emphasis is misplaced. He believes that that part of vision creation that is credited to intuition is really misidentified judgment. Colonel Forsythe's argument is that the leader's intuition is not enough without the vast experience which serves as the basis for his vision formulation but which is so well integrated that it is not distinguished as experience and so is mislabelled intuition.

Intuition

On the other hand, Colonel Terry Girdon makes a case for intuition being the source of a leader's vision. Girdon says that if the vision is simply the next logical step,

²⁶Bennis and Nanus, Leaders, 105.

²⁷Conversation with Colonel Barney Forsythe, 21 March 1991.

then any logical person could have created the vision and it is not vision.

In this it is important to distinguish between the logic of the vision (as an extension of a trend projection) and the logic that may have been applied by the leader in creating the vision. Colonel Girdon's view is that the entire process of creating vision is a function of "leadership in action"²⁸ and depends on the leader's attributes and aspects of his exercise of leadership. This is different from saying that vision is created as a result of a leader's capacity for vision.

Creativity

Whether analytic judgment or intuition is dominant, certainly creativity is crucial. Creativity is the ability to see the pattern²⁹ and the ability to persuade others of the importance of the vision and to obtain their commitment to it.³⁰

Communication

Beyond vision creation is the leader's ability to communicate the vision and to act to make the vision become part of the institution's "strategy and decision-making

²⁸Conversation with Colonel Terry Girdon, 26 April 1991.

²⁹Conversation with Colonel Barney Forsythe, 21 March 1991.

³⁰Bennis and Nanus, Leaders, 106-107.

process."³¹ The leader with vision must engage in post-vision creation activities which lead the institution to success:

Success requires the capacity to relate a compelling image of a desired state of affairs--the kind of image that induces enthusiasm and commitment in others.³²

Bennis and Nanus' view of how the image is related is through the use of graphs, metaphors, models, comparisons, analogies and synesthesia.

Anyone in the U.S. Army in 1983-87 could tell us what values and norms General Wickham envisioned for the institution then. General Wickham had a well-defined construct of the Army as an institution and of the individual values soldiers must have to bind them to the institution. Most important, General Wickham's vision provided coherence between cherished individual and institutional values and those which are effective in producing a high performing Army. In this way, his activity as a leader was to envision and communicate a values construct for the Army; then that provided meaning and brought success. He acted in his capacity as social architect, a keeper of the institutional culture.³³

³¹Ibid., 108-109.

³²Ibid., 33.

³³Ibid., 110-111.

CHAPTER 4

THE IMPORTANCE OF POSITION IN VISION FORMULATION

The leader who exercises strategic vision must be in a position from which strategic vision may be formulated. He must have certain personal characteristics which support vision creation. These personal attributes (such as self-confidence, risk-taking, perceiving, innovating, focus, balance, timing, reframing issues) are important. The position held by the strategic leader is critical.

Senior Positions and Strategic Leaders

First, the positions from which a leader exercises strategic vision in the Army would be generally limited to those of commanders in chief of functional or regional unified commands, the Commander of Training and Doctrine Command, the Army Chief of Staff and Secretary. Leaders in positions of less scope than these may have the personal characteristics needed in a strategic visionary; however, it is only in positions of the scope of responsibilities of those just mentioned from which strategic vision is necessary and achievable.

Lesser positions do not offer the connection to the other elements of national power: economic, political and social/psychological, a connection which helps define what is and is not a strategic concern and thus defines strategic vision. It is the exercise of these connections, the understanding of one's command (CINC or commander of a major

command) or position (Army Chief of Staff) within a context of the national environment that helps define a position as one at the strategic level and therefore as one offering the opportunity to formulate strategic vision.

A further distinction between strategic and other positions is that lesser positions are ones from which the leader may exercise his full authority within Army channels and is not called upon to interact with other leaders whose concerns extend beyond the Army or whose concerns are counterparts to the Army leader's. For example, the Commander, U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC), is not a strategic position. He coordinates with and is consulted by leaders of the other services' recruiting commands. He is interviewed by the media. He testifies before Congress. However, all of those decisions which would take the Recruiting Command beyond current Army policy are made at the department level (Headquarters, Department of the Army), not by the USAREC Commander.

Position from Which Vision Can Be Formulated

In a large institution, there is always at least one position from which strategic vision formulation is needed. If a supporting process does not exist, it can be created. If vision has not previously been articulated, it can be. If the leader lacks the capacity for strategic vision, either surrogate visionaries may be found and their work may be underwritten and endorsed by the leader. If the leader

lacks visioning capacity and lacks an appreciation for its place and recognition of those who can provide it, then the institution rarely compensates for this great loss of capacity.³⁴ The impact of failing to create or articulate a vision is enormous for the institution.

Value Added by the Strategic Leader

There is extensive material which describes the value added by a strategic leader (or, really, any leader). That value added is the leader's knowledge of the context in which the organization works, his understanding of the background against which decisions were made in the past, the frame of reference formed by the leader of the organization, and the "unique contribution" made by the leader in tasks which could not be delegated.³⁵ If the leader's added value requires extra-Army explanations in some detail, this is also evidence of a strategic position.

³⁴Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus believe that vision does not usually originate in the leader but from others who advise him or whose works the leader studies. They cite President Kennedy's study of the ideas of great thinkers and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s study of religious and ethical ideologies. The "leader must be a superb listener--particularly to those advocating new or different images of the emerging reality." Bennis and Nanus, pp. 95-96. That the leader derives vision from the study of others' great ideas or vision does not lessen the importance of his role to formulate vision. Whether the leader chooses from among alternative visions created by others or independently creates a vision, it is the judgment of the leader that is central in the decision about what constitutes the vision.

³⁵DA Pamphlet 600-80, Executive Leadership, 19 June 1987, 7.

Personal Ability

In identifying leaders who exercise strategic vision, the position held by the leader is the first criterion. The second criterion is the personal ability of the leader. That is, it is possible to have a leader in a strategic position who fails to create a strategic vision. Conversely, there are leaders in lesser positions who have the capacity to create and articulate a vision but hold a position that does not support or require a strategic vision.

CHAPTER 5

THE ARMY'S VISION PROCESS

The Army participates in a collection of processes which involve other services, the legislative branch and the National Command Authority (NCA). These processes begin with a statement of the purpose of the Army (which is contained in a law that rarely changes).³⁶ The current Army posture statement refers to the Army's purpose and is formally articulated annually by the Secretary of the Army and the Army Chief of Staff.³⁷ In recent years, the posture statement not only gives a comprehensive assessment of the state of the Army, but it points to improvements needed in the future. This serves as a foundation for Army plans and as rationale for the follow-on process known as the Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution System (PPBES). In the course of executing plans, programs and budgets, the Army's force structure is set in place. Priorities implied in the levels of resources provided are

³⁶Title 10, U.S. Code, section 3062, provides:

"An Army that is capable, in conjunction with the other armed forces, of--(1) preserving the peace and security and . . . providing for the defense of the United States. . . ; (2) supporting the national policies; (3) implementing the national objectives; and (4) overcoming any nations responsible for aggressive acts that imperil the peace and security of the United States."

(Army Command and Management Text, 1990-91, p. 6-6).

³⁷Ibid., 1990-91, 6-7.

acted on and the Army of the next six years takes shape.³⁸

An institutional vision of the future Army is defined collectively by the National Military Strategy, the Defense Planning Guidance, the Army Long-Range Planning Guidance, and statements of needs and strategies provided by functional and regional Commanders-in-Chief. These long-range planning documents provide the foundation for developing the force using the Concept Based Requirements System (CBRS), PPBES, and the Structure and Composition System (SACS).³⁹ In the description of the Army's processes in which strategic, operational and battlefield requirements, research and development, resources (material, people and units) are integrated to produce the Army, there is generally institutional coherence.⁴⁰ These processes have produced a highly successful Army.

Where Strategic Vision Takes Place

The resolution of these issues lies in defining where the process of creating strategic vision takes place. It is neither entirely an intuitive (and so magical) activity of a visionary leader, nor is it reducible entirely to systematic activities of an institutional process. It is a combination of these. In order to create strategic vision, there are

³⁸Army Strategic Management Concepts, Army Command and Management Text, 1990-91, Chapter 6.

³⁹Ibid., Chapter 11.

⁴⁰Ibid., Chapter 3.

qualities or attributes which must be present in the leader and there are systematic approaches to handling the future which must be in place in an institution.

What stimulates the creation of vision is the dynamic nature of changing times. Vision creation should be an on-going process. Even if it is not routinely done, it is vitally important during times of change--change in the domestic or international environment, change in leaders, or changes in the people in the Army or the American public. Any change in these stimulates the creation or revision of vision.

Strategic Vision Process

To help describe the process, the following chart summarizes some points made earlier about vision and provides some comment on the process to be described.

<u>Time Frame</u>	<u>Present-5 yrs</u>	<u>6-10 yrs</u>	<u>11-20 yrs</u>	<u>21-50 yrs</u>
Scope of vision	narrow	-----		broad
Vision's objectives	specific	-----		general
Staying power of the vision's relevance	relevance passes quickly	-----		Should be relevant for a long time. If it is not, this is because it was not a vision or because of some major upheaval not taken into account.
Vision's impact on this period	almost no impact	some impact	much impact	almost complete impact

Time Frame	<u>Present-5 yrs</u>	<u>6-10 yrs</u>	<u>11-20 yrs</u>	<u>21-50 yrs</u>
Degree of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity (VUCA)	least -----			greatest
Importance of creating vision as a function of VUCA	least -----			most
Why there are problems in creating strategic vision for these peri- ods	Due to (1) daily distractions of daily tasks and crises and short-term measures of success; (2) diffi- culty in identifying that small aspect of this period in which vision could play a part	Due to confu- sion of what is appro- priate subject (1) of planning and (2) of vision	Due to lack of vision for 21-50 yr period	
The focus for change	ends o ways oo means oooo	ends o ways ooo means o	ends oooo ways oo means o	ends oooo ways o means
Dominant processes	Army Program	mid-term planning	long-range planning	vision
Methods to project	resources	trend extra- polation	all fore- casting	intuition 80%, results of extended fore- casts 20%

See footnote 41 for explanation of symbols.

Vision

An explanation of the chart follows:

<u>Time</u> <u>Frame</u>	<u>Present-5 yrs</u>	<u>6-10 yrs</u>	<u>11-20 yrs</u>	<u>21-50 yrs</u>	
Scope of vision	narrow	-----			broad
Vision's objectives	specific	-----			general
Staying power of the vision's relevance	relevance passes quickly	-----			Should be relevant for a long time. If it is not, this is because it was not a vision or because of some major upheaval not taken into account.
Vision's impact on this period	almost no impact	some impact	much impact	almost complete impact	

These four entries on the chart capture some aspects of vision. These indicate that while vision is generally about the distant future and is broad in scope, a vision of narrow scope relating to the near future is not entirely eliminated. Thus, impact and relevance also are defined as strongest in visions of periods more distant into the future, though not discounting the possibility of a vision's impact on the near term.

The next six entries in the matrix are an attempt to capture some elements of the process of creating strategic vision.

Degree of VUCA

<u>Time</u> <u>Frame</u>	<u>Present-5 yrs</u>	<u>6-10 yrs</u>	<u>11-20 yrs</u>	<u>21-50 yrs</u>
Degree of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity (VUCA)	least	-----		greatest

The first of these is the degree of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA) that is associated with the vision of the Army along the timeline from the present to 50 years in the future. Tomorrow's future is less ambiguous than the future of 2040.

To the extent that vision only comprises the unresolved part of the future, there is far less vision to be formulated for 1992 than there is for 2040. Almost all of what 1992 is to become has already been determined by actions set in motion two, ten and forty years ago. So, vision has little to do with the present and plays a great role in the distant future.

Vision as a Function of VUCA

<u>Time</u> <u>Frame</u>	<u>Present-5 yrs</u>	<u>6-10 yrs</u>	<u>11-20 yrs</u>	<u>21-50 yrs</u>
Importance of creating vision as a function of VUCA	least	-----		most

The second element, the importance of creating vision as a function of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, is also a continuum along the timeline from being less important in the near term and becoming more important for periods farther in the future. This increasing importance is related to the increasing degree of VUCA. Not only is the uncertainty greater and not only does vision play a greater role with respect to the distant future, but the importance of creating a vision for the more distant future increases. This is simply because failure to create a vision of 2040 will not only result in that period being left to the mere churnings of time as future becomes history without a leader's intervention, but also it is a missed opportunity to create a vision. This missed opportunity cannot be completely made up. It can be compensated for. The resulting crises can be managed; but the future's full potential will be lost for lack of a vision at the most appropriate time (when a maximum amount of that future could still have been the subject of vision). As the degree of VUCA increases, vision creation becomes more important.

Reasons for Problems in Vision Creation

The following chart displays in graphic form the problems in vision formulation related to time:

<u>Time Frame</u>	<u>Present-5 yrs</u>	<u>6-10 yrs</u>	<u>11-20 yrs</u>	<u>21-50 yrs</u>
Why there are problems in creating strategic vision for these periods	Due to (1) daily distractions of daily tasks and crises and short-term measures of success; (2) difficulty in identifying that small aspect of this period in which vision could play a part	Due to confusion of what is appropriate subject (1) of planning and (2) of vision	Due to lack of vision for 21-50 yr period	

Near Term Difficulties

The third element listed in the matrix on process concerns the problems associated with vision creation. The difficulty in formulating a vision does not get greater as the period being envisioned is more distant in the future. If there were a timeline showing the difficulty of planning, there would be a direct correlation between time distance in the future and planning problems.

It is more difficult to plan for 2010 than it is to plan for 1992, because planning requires a degree of certainty that is more available in the near term than the long term. The vision process is, in this respect, very different from the planning process.

Vision does not seek to maximize certainty because it does not, as does planning, attempt to project a continuum

from the present to the future. But the reasons for difficulties change. Difficulties in the near term (present to 5 years) are primarily due to two features of this period, one of which is distraction. The leader is distracted by the many daily tasks, by the crises (due in part to lack of application of vision and planning in the past), and by the requirements of short-term measures of success.

The other feature of vision is that, in the near term, it plays only a small part, and so the need for vision is hard to detect. When the need for vision in the near term is overlooked, the impact is minimal and the negative feedback is relatively mild and hard to trace to the original deficiency (in vision). When most of the alligators are biting because of lack of vision on the part of past leaders, it is easy to overlook small nippers.

Difficulties in the Mid Term

Difficulties in formulating vision for the mid term (six to ten years) are mainly due to unsuccessfully distinguishing between vision creation and planning. Many leaders would consider the six-to-ten-year future the long term. The leader has the greatest planning task in this period and is so consumed by it that he rarely sees that creating strategic vision is a process separate from planning and does not depend on those plans, although the two are linked. The linkage in this period is in the

discovery of which part of the future is subject to plans and which part to vision.

Consider today's leader. Planning for the period 1997-2001 demands the application of all tools available, but trend projection is probably the most productive one for this mid-term future. For the unknown aspects of the future, the leader must either continue to pursue these (using planning) to reduce uncertainties and ambiguities, or he must recognize these unknowns as being subject to vision formulation, not planning. It is a crucial distinction. To mistake what is essentially an unknown aspect of the future (and so an appropriate subject of vision) for an uncertainty to be reduced to certainty by planning will lead to frustration and mistakes in the final vision of the future. To do the reverse, to mistake a reducible unknown (what should be planned for) for what is truly an unknown (and for which vision should be formulated) leads to creating fantasies instead of visions. That confusion is what discredits both processes and frustrates the leader.

Long Term Difficulties

For the period 11-20 years in the future, difficulties in creating strategic vision are similar to the problems of mid-term vision creation and are partly attributable to lack of vision in the extreme long term (21-50 years out). What contributes to difficulty in creating a vision for the 11-20 year and 21-50 year periods also has to do with the sense of

responsibility for that period, for lack of accountability of leaders today for that part of the future and for the way we measure success in quarterly increments and bottom-line profit reports instead of in what a leader has done to fulfill the needs of the future.

Measuring Success

Nothing in our way of organizing our work provides measures of success to include future vision, and rarely is work constructed which creates a position from which vision can be readily created. Most jobs, even for high-level leaders, are constructed with a lot of diversification of function and minimal integration. This is discussed in more detail in conclusions and recommendations four (p. 63) and seven (p. 67).

Focus for Change

Time Frame	Present-5 yrs	6-10 yrs	11-20 yrs	21-50 yrs
The focus	ends o	ends o	ends oooo	ends oooo
for change	ways oo	ways ooo	ways oo	ways o
	means oooo	means o	means o	means

The fourth element displays the focus of the leader with respect to ends, ways and means along a timeline.⁴²

⁴¹o means very little focus; oooo means greatest focus.

⁴²According to Colonel Arthur F. Lykke, Jr.,

"'Ends' can be expressed as military objectives. 'Ways' are concerned with the various methods of applying military force. 'Means' refers to the military resources (manpower, materiel, money, forces, logistics, etc.) required to accomplish the

It relates these to vision in that vision is a desired end state. To the extent that a leader's concerns are dominated by ends, there is a basis for creating strategic vision. This element is best described in reverse order of the others, starting with the 21-50-year period. In the extreme long term, the focus is entirely on ends and not at all on means. It is conceivable that ways may receive some attention even in this distant future. In the long term, 11-20 years, the focus is almost entirely on ends, with some curtailed reference to ways and almost no focus on means. In the mid term, the focus is primarily in ways, some reference to ends, and very little on means. In the short term, the means is the primary focus, with some attention to ways and very little focus on the ends. The differences in focus among the different periods reflect what can be affected for the period about which decisions are being made.

mission."

Arthur F. Lykke, Jr., "Toward an Understanding of Military Strategy," Military Strategy: Theory and Application (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1989).

Processes and Methods: Differences between Near, Mid and Long Term

<u>Time Frame</u>	<u>Present-5 yrs</u>	<u>6-10 yrs</u>	<u>11-20 yrs</u>	<u>21-50 yrs</u>
Dominant processes	Army Program	mid-term planning	long-range planning	vision
Methods to project	resources	trend extra- polation	all fore- casting	intuition 80%, results of extended fore- casts 20%

Another way to look at this is described in the fifth and sixth elements of the process part of the matrix.

Near Term

The dominant Army process for handling the near term is the Army Program, and the method to project into that period is by resource decisions. To integrate the elements of the chart: the near term is the least ambiguous, least uncertain period. Vision plays the smallest part in a leader's handling of the near term. The leader's main focus in the near term is on the means by which to enact the ways and ends described for the period. This is accomplished by resource decisions in the Army Program.

Mid Term

The mid term (six to ten years) is most affected by mid-term planning, and trend extrapolation is the method that is most useful for projecting into this period.

Long Term

The long term (11-20 years) is subject to Army long-term planning processes, and all forecasting and planning methods apply. This is the period most distant in the future in which serious consideration of ways is likely. The focus in the long term is on ends; and planning is the process, though vision may be formulated.

Failure to create a vision for this period can be compensated in some degree by sophisticated planning, especially when the current leader builds on a previous leader's earlier vision for that period. This would be the best of all worlds, to have continuity of vision from one leader to another. This is not to suggest a stagnant vision but to encourage a stability of vision for a certain period. This is discussed in more detail in conclusions and recommendations ten (p. 70) and twelve (p. 71).

Extreme Long Term

In the extreme long term (21-50 years), the dominant process is vision formulation and the method is mainly an intuitive one, supplemented by the results of forecasts of the future. In the chart, just to give a most general concept of the proportion of the one method to the other, 80 percent intuition is contrasted with 20 percent future projection. Certainly, this varies with leaders and the institutions they head. Dr. Bill Stockton⁴³ has talked

⁴³Personal communications, March 1991.

about his belief that the visionary, as one who sees possible futures or future possibilities, does not need much information but needs to be highly intuitive. This is supported by the descriptions of the vision creation process as distinct from the planning process. A leader with a great deal of information may "get stuck" in a logical trend projection which does not get farther than the mid term, or long term at best. To the extent that he focuses on what he thinks will happen, vision creation is inhibited.

Summary

This examination of the process of creating vision has been descriptive not only of what the leader does but also of what the institution does to support vision creation. It is clear that there are approaches to take concerning institutional participation in vision creation which are helpful to the leader. That these can be described means these can be improved and augmented by additional institutional supports. This is needed in the Army. Some of the conclusions and recommendations to be reached about how the Army could improve its support of vision creation are found in the chapter (Chapter Seven) after the next.

CHAPTER 6

THE BARRIERS TO VISION CREATION

If vision creation is so important to an institution, why don't we do it better and give it more priority? There are several explanations: some are related to the personal concerns of the leader, and some are institutional barriers.

Personal Barriers

First, a distinction needs to be made between the leader who has a vision and fails to express it and the leader who has no vision. The first leader is still a better leader than the second. This is because the mere creation of a vision will help shape the guidance the leader gives his executives and planners and will help guide the leader in strategic decision making. He is like a sighted man leading his blindfolded organization down a path. The organization will stumble, will not be able to contribute to the vision, may not understand the context of their work, but there will be a coherence which might become apparent to the more perceptive followers, and they can move along a path toward a goal, the possible future seen by the leader. The second leader, the one who fails to formulate a strategic vision, is like a blind man leading the organization: no vision, no frame of reference, no sense of what the environment is or what the path is or what progress is being made, like a blind man leading a blindfolded organization.

For the purpose of discussing why a leader is discouraged from creating a vision, let's keep the distinction blurred between the two leaders just illustrated. No strategic leader is completely without a vision, and no strategic leader who has formulated a vision is able or wants to conceal that vision completely. Often a leader resorts to a very private formulation of vision. This may be because he has not empowered a staff to help him or because he is so introverted as to prefer to develop his vision internally. Or, the reason given by one officer in a position to have observed Army vision creation, the leader keeps his vision private as a tactic to avoid criticism of the vision or to protect it from deliberate destruction by rivals for resources or power.

A counter to each of these motives for not expressing vision publicly is available. First, a leader ought to welcome criticism of his vision for the Army or organization. Criticism can be useful to improve or refine the vision. It can serve as advance warning to the leader of the opponent's view (in time to counter). Criticism shows that the vision is important enough to have earned the attention of other leaders.

A vision that garners no comment or opposition may well not be a very robust vision (robust meaning that it has

impact or is significant). In fact, Colonel Girdon's⁴⁴ comment is that this is almost a partial definition of vision: if the vision creates no controversy or opposition, it may not qualify as a vision since it already is familiar territory.

Second, the attempt to avoid destruction of a vision by competing rivals for resources and power loses sight of the fact that the visionary establishes power by framing the future, by proposing a vision. The concern is that if the Army leader announces his vision, the other service chiefs or CINCs or Congress will either immediately or eventually try to discredit that vision. Immediate attacks can be treated as helpful suggestions (as the leader chooses) to improve the vision. Later finger pointing by rivals to the effect that the vision was flawed can be countered simply: vision is not prediction. A vision of the future does not have to be borne out by subsequent events to validate its original value.

Still, it is difficult for a leader to formulate a vision and to resist the protective or defensive posture of not publicly articulating that vision. In the final analysis, this may be because we tend to personalize the leader's vision. Whether or not the vision is the sole effort of the leader (and at the Army level, it would be

⁴⁴Conversation with Colonel Terry Girdon, 26 April 1991.

very unusual to have a CINC or CSA articulate a vision as the result of an individual effort), that vision should be presented in such a way that all members of the leader's close circle of advisors may take ownership in it. The broader-based the ownership of a vision, the more effective it will be as a direction for the Army and the more likely it is to be a vision that is truly useful to the Army's future success.

There are other explanations about barriers to vision creation. One is found in a discussion about technology and social choice by Michael Schwarz. It has its parallel in the question of vision creation. Mr. Schwarz contrasts "unanticipated consequences" and "inconsequent anticipations."⁴⁵ When we consider strategic vision, the impact of inconsequent anticipations is harder to measure and so is perceived as being less harmful than its reverse: unanticipated consequences.

The vision which fails to reduce unanticipated consequences to an acceptable level will be more subject to criticism because it is "something to shoot at;" it presents a "target" that inconsequent anticipations do not.

However, the potential harm of inconsequent anticipations is far greater. It is far more expensive and wasteful

⁴⁵Michael Schwarz and Michael Thompson, Divided We Stand, Redefining Politics, Technology and Social Choice (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), 103-104.

consequent anticipations requires addressing all anticipated outcomes).

No institutions have unlimited resources, and no leader would be endorsed for taking any approach which fails to make any choices about which possible consequences to prepare for. If a leader sees his choice in vision in such "either-or" terms as these (and many do), it is no wonder that those leaders prefer to handle unanticipated consequences. This is politically useful since the leader can point the finger at his predecessor; and it is appealing since it puts the leader firmly in the arena of certainty (the consequences are current and observable).

Another explanation of the barriers involved in creating strategic vision is that of Gerald M. Weinberg, who wrote, "Any real problem has one more solution, which nobody has found--yet."⁴⁶ He explains that there are:

Three Great Obstacles to Innovation

1 - self-blindness: the inability to see ourselves as others see us so there is no chance of changing.

2 - "no problem" syndrome: convincing yourself that you already know the answer to all problems.

3 - single solution belief: belief in the central dogma of academic psychology, blinding you to alternate solutions, even ones you could generate without help from anyone else.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Weinberg, Becoming a Technical Leader, 85.

⁴⁷Ibid., 65 and 71.

Weinberg wrote this about innovation, but it applies to creating a vision. Failure to create a strategic vision may be due to the leader (1) not seeing it as his responsibility, or (2) not recognizing the absence of or need for a vision (or misidentifying something as vision in spite of its not being a vision), or (3) retaining an outdated vision that has outlived its usefulness.

Yet another answer to the question of what are the barriers to creating vision is that the leader lacks confidence. The essential characteristic of the visionary leader involves self-confidence--confidence in his own judgment to create a vision, confidence in the appropriateness of a vision for the institution, and confidence in the vision itself sufficient to advocate it persistently.

Institutional Barriers

Institutional barriers to vision creation are as general as a leader selection process which does not choose visionaries or as specific as having such an imbalance in the division of work that a leader is overwhelmed by current operations and has no energy for visioning. The most difficult barrier to overcome is to establish a culture in the institution which values vision, provides appropriate information and contacts for the leader to support his creating vision, and finally responds to the vision. The first point is one for which Colonel Richard Yarger⁴⁸

⁴⁸Conversation with Colonel Richard Yarger, April 1991.

provides an interesting example: The Army, in its selection criteria for promotion to captain, may unwittingly select out those lieutenants whose early creativity and initiative put them on the apparent fringes of their peer group with respect to discipline or ability to follow direction (in the pursuit of "attention to detail"). Colonel Yarger cites the lieutenant who did not line up his vehicles in the motor pool in a prescribed manner (by type, all trailers in one row, all trucks in another), but who lined them up in the order needed to form a convoy with trailers next to each truck. When a lieutenant did this the first time, he may have been penalized for not following the Standard Operating Procedures but may have been innovative and have provided an improved way to organize the motor pool. Most senior Army officers see the value in such officers, but senior officers may be too removed organizationally to buffer those young, potential visionaries from less imaginative middle-grade officers who may or may not appreciate their potential. The institutional barrier to creating vision is the Army's leader selection process which permits the visionary, creative leaders to survive a selection process that favors adaptors.

That the institution needs to organize work load to include thinking and visioning time for the leader is apparent. The difficulty is that most Army work is valued based on tasks completed, objectives met, missions

accomplished. Indirect and very long-term measures of success are needed to create a demand for visionary leadership. The Army is not alone in this apparent lack of regard for the value of a leader's visioning capacity and activity.

The third concern about an institutional culture which supports vision creation is one which the Army does well and has little need to improve. As an institution, the Army values vision, supports it at appropriate levels, and has mechanisms for responding to it. One aspect of the Army that is a strength in this regard is the Army's distance from productivity measures and profit incentives. That the Army has primarily a training and readiness mission forces it to keep oriented on the future rather than the current quarter. Cost-benefit analyses lend themselves to short-term value assessments and must be confined to evaluations of long-term efforts (for new systems introduction decisions but not for specific research and development decisions, for example).

There is a down side to being what Peter Drucker calls a public service institution.⁴⁹ That is, public service institutions focus on programs and projects (instead of on objectives), try to maximize their efforts (instead of optimize), struggle with programs which have repeatedly failed, considering this "good reason for trying and trying

⁴⁹Peter F. Drucker, Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Practice and Principles (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1985), 183.

again"⁵⁰ (instead of questioning the validity of the objective), view change as a threat (instead of as an opportunity). This last point is borne out in the Army FM 22-103, Leadership and Command at Senior Levels, June 1987. There is a lot of emphasis on control and adaptation and not enough discussion of innovation. This is discussed in Chapter 7, Conclusions and Recommendations, at Item Two (p. 62) and Item Five (p. 64).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter covers the conclusions about strategic vision which apply to Army strategic leaders, the way the Army nurtures a capacity for vision in its senior leaders, and the institution and its vision creation processes. Although the focus in this paper has been the institution and the process, the vision creation process is linked so directly to the capacity of the leader that these implications for the Army are covered first.

Section I: Developing Visionary Leaders

1. Decision-making in Uncertainty

Conclusion

Army officers are trained to develop certainty from uncertainty. Activities focus on reducing uncertainties by scouting and logical analysis of alternatives. These are the province of planners and contribute invaluablely to operational success. However, these do not build visionaries. A visionary must be comfortable with uncertainty. While the visionary leader helps reduce uncertainty for his institution, his own vision activity must take place in the arena of the uncertain. And he must be confident of his vision; his self-confidence helps "sell" his vision.⁵¹

⁵¹Conversation with Colonel Girdon, 26 April 1991.

Recommendation

The Army should provide opportunities in training and in the way it organizes its work to give field grade officers some experience in working with uncertainty. This could be as mundane as including vision in the Command and General Staff College curriculum. Most effective would be incorporating some changes to be recommended below under conclusions and recommendations for the institution (see pp. 65-73).

2. Changing the Army Ethos to Include Vision Creation

Conclusion

Because vision usually is created for periods which extend beyond the expected length of tenure for an officer in any one job (or perhaps his remaining career), work to create vision or to support vision creation is not measured, encouraged or even generally respected. It is viewed as "nice to have if you really insist on it."

Recommendation

Change this ethos by adding vision creation to the outcomes expected of selected general officer assignments. See also Conclusion and Recommendation Item Four (p. 63).

3. Confusion of Planning with Vision Creation

Conclusion

Planning is confused with vision creation, in part, because the period being considered coincides for each. One way to help clarify this confusion is to use the concept of

second and third order effects. Second order effects of a projected change are predictable effects secondary to the intended change (that is, the first order effect). Third order effects are the unpredicted outcomes of change. Planning focuses on second order effects and vision creation is of both second and third order effects. The mature strategic leader identifies a point when analysis of effects is essentially complete and the "territory" of the unknown is described. Identifying what part of change is in the arena of second order effects and subjecting that to planning methods helps establish definitions for what remains in the province of vision. Visionary leaders do this with skill. Leaders who fail to do this cause problems for their institutions. Nothing wastes more time than trying to apply planning for what requires vision; and nothing is less effective than being visionary when plans are needed.

Recommendation

Leaders need to learn by doing. Some things are only learned by experience. This is one of them.

4. Focus on Ends (Objectives) Facilitates Vision Creation

Conclusion

Leaders who focus on ends or objectives are better oriented to develop vision.

Recommendation

Structure general officer positions in the force to eliminate the tendency to focus on means and ways. This may

require integration of functions now considered essential to the current definition of some staff and command positions. Conclusion and Recommendation Item Seven (p. 67) discusses this in some detail.

5. Leader Attributes Make the Difference

Conclusion

Two attributes critical to visionary leaders include propensity for constructive risk-taking and self-confidence. The Army does a good job of developing these attributes in its leaders. Other characteristics which may produce more capacity for vision creation are being at the high end of the innovation scale on the Kirton-Adaptation Innovation Inventory, being an intuitive thinker and/or a perceiver on the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator.

Recommendation

With respect to self-confidence, no change is needed in the Army's development of its people. Risk-taking is sometimes, inappropriately, confused with loyalty issues at the senior leader level. If this were sorted out, creativity would flourish to the benefit of vision. High innovators and "Ps" (perceivers) may be selected out early in their careers in the Army due to the effort to build discipline. The Army needs to continue to keep the definition of an "acceptable" (survivable to next promotion) junior leader sufficiently broad to include those who may later be visionary.

Section II: The Institution and the Process

6. Forecasts as a Basis of Vision

Conclusion

Forecasts of the future, though a separate process, are a starting point for vision creation. The leader begins by understanding the possible futures and establishing a vision of the desired future. The Army does not systematically produce a forecast. Forecasts may be deduced from long-range planning documents and from changes in doctrine, but there is no formal forecasting system in place. One forecast (whether offering one or several alternative futures) would be too limited to be useful if the Army were to undertake the task of producing a forecast. In this respect, the Army mirrors the pluralistic society it protects.⁵²

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"America faces a 21st Century challenged by military and political competition with the Soviet Union, terrorism in the Third World, and economic competition with Asia and Europe. Our weaknesses are due as much as anything to our lack of strategic vision. We lack effective systems for systematic, long-range planning and an ability to think about long-range agendas for large institutions. America is traditionally a pragmatic, fragmented, short-term focused country. Our strength is in the power of the free market place of goods and ideas. This freedom stimulates and guides individual entrepreneurs to achieve great things."

Newt Gingrich, "Introduction," in Creating Strategic Vision, ed. P. M. Smith, J. P. Allen, J. H. Stewart II, P. D. Whitehouse (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1987), xvii.

Recommendation

The Army needs to create the opportunity and the environment for vision creation. This is best done by making forecasts available to the Army community of potential supporters of vision creation throughout the Training and Doctrine system.

For the first few decades, the Army would be best served by producing multiple forecasts, fostering diverse approaches, and reducing the chilling effect of competition created by choosing one forecast. It is tempting to task branch proponents to produce forecasts, but these would be too narrow and too parochial to be of Army-wide value. The integrating centers would be an appropriate level at which to begin the vision process. With proponents' input, the integrating centers could produce forecasts. Inevitably, these would be followed by vision creation, if not at the centers, then at either Training and Doctrine Command Headquarters or at the Department of the Army. The forecasts would be useful to suggest areas for greater study (as the USAF does)⁵³ and would be an important vehicle for

⁵³The USAF has supported vision creation in the Operations and Plans Directorate of the Air Staff (XOX) since 1977. Most recently this element wrote the Air Force Innovation Study in 1985 for 1995-2025. It:

identified (1) alternative futures within which the USAF may operate, (2) emerging technologies and applications, (3) significant innovations in technology, organizational structure, resources and concepts of operation.

creating the framework of a distant future about which visionaries could array their views for collaborative effort.

7. Uncertainty is the Province of Vision

Conclusion

Planners extrapolate trends and forecast futures in order first to reduce uncertainty and then to work with what is certain. Visionaries work with uncertainty. In fact, vision creation is inhibited when a leader is more certain of the future than uncertain. Of the total future, planning deals with what is more certain and vision applies to what is more uncertain.

The work of most people, including leaders, deals in the near term and so deals in certainty. The very scope of most leadership positions is usually limited to short- and mid-term objectives (operations) while the long term is left

Then the "most promising concepts" were selected and studied for implementation and for barriers to their use. The study included consideration of "methods to encourage and systematically incorporate future innovations in AF plans and programs." The key to this, according to J. P. Allen, was that the headquarters and operating divisions were involved, that there was strong support and active participation by top leadership and that "concise top-down guidance" was issued. (Allen, Creating Strategic Vision, 36-40)

The Air Staff is currently proposing to produce a trends book, not a plan, not alternative worlds. They will study a lot of trends: economic, technological, hypersonics, environmental challenges, education. They will study the interaction of trends and issue a broad speculative statement. This is intended to stimulate thought, change focus, and broaden perspective.

to a different part of the institution (planning). When these are not integrated in the institution, it is very likely (1) that the long term is viewed as a mechanical detail to be relegated to less powerful leaders and (2) that operational leaders compete for resources and power at the expense of the planning element. The institution's failure to integrate long-range planning in the intermediate manager/leader's work causes three problems. First, the long term is neglected because it is not mainstream. Second, it is decoupled from current operations and loses relevance (justifying the neglect). The third and most pernicious problem of this approach is that it means the leader of the institution has no previous experience in handling uncertainty and the long term. (His previous development was through the "fast track" current operations channel.)

Recommendation

Structure the work of the institution to include responsibility for the short, mid and long term in each of the leaders' jobs at intermediate level and above. Integrating short- and long-range scopes forces potential strategic leaders to learn to handle uncertainty, forces consideration of the long term in decisions about the short term at the lowest level, and, most important, will protect the long-term interests from being sacrificed for the short term. In instances where the short term is supported at a

cost to long-term interests, the expense will not be transparent to the institution's "fast track" leaders.

8. The Necessity of Vision in Times of Uncertainty

Conclusion

Vision is more necessary at times of great change (in the environment, in leaders or changes in perceptions). The greater the volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, the greater the need for the direction that vision provides planners and operators.

Recommendation

The United States and the Army are at just such a crossroads of change; vision creation is critical. Even sub-optimum vision creation is better than making no effort to formulate a vision.

9. Vision Process Is More Important than Goal

Conclusion

In the process of creating vision, ownership and interest is generated among those who contribute to the creation of a vision. When a process includes more than one person, it needs to be transparent to all participants so that they can see not only the output (the conclusion), but also the inputs (assumptions and the logic or construct which performed the "algorithmic" function).

Recommendation

Army officers in the last half of their careers need to begin to build proficiency in the skills which are the

foundation of vision creation. By institutionalizing the value of vision, the participation in providing input to the process at the lowest possible levels (at proponents and integrating centers) will have some important payoffs:

(1) build skills, (2) provide ideas, (3) build ownership in the Army at lower echelons, thereby creating some continuity as young generals become senior leaders.

10. Vision: Providing for Change and for Continuity

Conclusion

Creation of vision should be a dynamic process. Even if the leader is not different from one year to the next, the environment is. A vision rarely would change radically, but it would change over time. For stability and continuity, vision should be reviewed periodically (not waiting for catastrophic change to force a review of vision), and the vision for the Army should be transferable from one leader to the next.

Recommendation

To achieve this continuity, some systematic review of vision is needed, to include the active participation of the Army's very highest executives (the group from which succeeding CINC's, Chiefs of Staff, and Army Secretaries would be chosen). The inclusion of the Army's highest executives will provide the mechanism for greater continuity of vision when strategic leaders are changed.

11. Measures of Effectiveness Should Include Vision

Creation

Conclusion

Measures of effectiveness can become bureaucratic stumbling blocks for an institution in which the large staffs torture numbers until they tell the story we want to hear. But, if measures of effectiveness are cast in terms outlined by a vision, they can contribute to leaders at levels below the strategic leader keeping focused on long-term perspectives. This is critical for the Army as a public service institution with the limits on innovation and efficiency as suggested by Peter Drucker.⁵⁴

Recommendation

Develop measures of effectiveness at the most senior officer levels which extend beyond objectives and include such processes as vision creation.

12. Making Vision Creation Less Threatening

Conclusion

Vision is evaluated at the time it is created, not retrospectively. The focus, then, is on what the creation of vision does for systems and institutions as they operate now. (For example, what effect did President Kennedy's vision to put a man on the moon have on the school system, on the military-industrial base, on America?)

⁵⁴Drucker, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, 183. See also p. 58 of this paper.

Vision creation may be the work of one leader, but if other leaders have been "brought along," the vision has greater chance of acceptance. As more leaders "own" the vision, it becomes the vision of the institution rather than only of the first single "owner."

Recommendation

Reduce the risk of creating vision by involving more than one senior leader at an early stage of vision creation. Make the vision (not its originator) the focus of critical (positive and negative) feedback.

13. What We Don't Need is Another System

Conclusion

Vision creation does not lend itself to systems and bureaucratic structures. The Army has numerous planning and programming systems and has no need of yet another. However, the Army does not have a voice or a language for expressing vision once it is created. And that expression does need to be linked, however informally, to planning and programming efforts.

Recommendation

This is something the leaders in positions requiring strategic vision are doing now through their statements of requirements. What needs work is ensuring that these statements are based on a shared vision. The informality of the current approach to building plans provides flexibility when

vision takes the institution in a direction that is not the next logical step and requires substantial change.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY

Strategic vision is created by a leader of an institution and as vision is a product of both, there are two concluding perspectives.

Leader Development

The strategic leader considers his legacy to the institution as he enters his assignment and during his years in the position. The Army teaches its officers to leave the units and staffs they have led with some personal contribution of lasting value--a legacy. We undertake this responsibility seriously and with purpose. No less should be expected of a strategic leader to create a vision. Vision sustains the institution through succeeding years; no other leader is in a position to do this for the institution if its leader fails to do it. Yet, the Army has not gotten serious about the importance of vision.

The development of leaders of courage and self-confidence is underway and is in no need of any significant improvement. The Army does need to build into its ethos a respect for innovation and a de-emphasis on adaptation. We need to build a capacity for vision creation and uncertainty earlier in general officers' development, even if this means creating artificial opportunities for exercising this capacity (in training, exercises and staff efforts).

Institutional Processes

No separate process or system for creating strategic vision is needed. However, there are activities which could be undertaken to foster the creation of strategic vision.

In the use of forecasts of trends and events, there should be an awareness of how the systems affecting these trends and events change. Understanding how domestic and international systems work and what causes them to change will expand our understanding of second-order effects.

The creation of strategic vision must not be permitted to depend on just one leader. The process of vision creation is not limited to some mysterious activity internal to one person. It can be supported by institutional activity such as placing value on innovation and systematically seeking opportunity to envision a desired future.

In an environment of declining resources available to the Army, it is imperative to agree on desired end states before investing effort on plans and programs (ways and means).

The way the visionary leader formulates and communicates his vision needs to be corporate, inspiring and linked to planning. In doing this, strategic vision would find its voice in the Army.

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